

Under The Dim Lights

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Under The Dim Lights

by Anonymous

Summary

The bar was dim, the customers sitting at their tables with drinks in their hands. They waited for the final act, Phoenix. No one knew much about him, besides that he had blond hair that shimmered like gold and blue eyes that were as clear as the sky. The air stilled as the bar owner, Sam, spoke.

"This is the last performance of the night, everyone please cheer for Phoenix!"

They watched as person walked up to the stage. A young boy wearing a red and gold masquerade mask, the colors perfectly matching his name. Phoenix stopped his stride as he reached the microphone stand, grasping the microphone and pulling it from the stand before sitting down. He scanned the crowd, before a smirk formed on his lips as the music started playing. He brought the microphone to his lips and took one last glance at the crowd before closing his eyes.

The patrons could only stare in awe as an angelic voice filled the bar.

In which, Tommy Innit Craft sings at Sam's bar. He finds a family of his own and tries to ignore the hole that his negligent family made. However, when his family discovers he has a double life, what will come of it? Will they fix their relationship with Tommy, or shatter what is left entirely?

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Cut That Always Bleeds

Tommy didn't know when he got accustomed to the loneliness he felt. He didn't know when attention began to feel more abnormal than being ignored or scorned. He simply accepted his fate, he accepted he would never had a place in his family. It was a numb acceptance, like ice on sprained ankle. It didn't heal the pain, but it helped Tommy forget it for a little. It helped ease Tommy's hurt.

He believed it.

Tommy thought he would be alone until he left the city he grew up in.

That was until he met Sam and the others who worked at his bar, "The Creeper". Despite the name, it was a higher-end bar where some wealthy customers spent their time. It sat in the wealthier part of the city, themed with shades of greens and blacks with a mascot called a creeper.

He had met the man after he ran blindly in the rain. His feet thumping against the ground, threatening to slip if he wasn't careful. It was night, a horrible night that wore down on his mind like a water to a rock. It eroded him entirely. He didn't know where he was going and he didn't care as long as he could get away.

That's when he met Sam.

Sam stood there, outside his bar, ready to close it down for the night. At that moment, as he locked the door, he saw the blond running towards his direction as if the devil himself was chasing the child. Tommy slipped and fell in front of him, his knees and knuckles scraped, and blood under his fingernails that didn't belong to him. He huffed and wheezed. He gasped for air that only wanted to escape. Sam, instead of ignoring him, covered the boy with his umbrella and reopened his bar. He ushered the boy in, not having the heart to look away from a terrified child.

Tommy couldn't have imagined how it would change his life for the better.

Before he met Sam, Tommy had no idea where he wanted to go in his life, lived in constant fear, and marked his arms with scars that would never fade.

It was different now.

He had meaning in a world that had tried to give him none.

Tommy walked to work the happiest he had ever been in his life.

Each step felt right and each breath felt worth it.

Tommy wore his mask, it was red and gold with orange feathers to the right of the mask. He had slid on his mask a few blocks before the bar, trying to keep his identity anonymous as he passed by the small line in the front of the bar. Most recognized him as he walked past, shouting his stage name, "Phoenix!". He waved at them before rushing into the bar.

He entered the bar through the side door, meant for employees, smiling as he spotted Sam. The green-haired male talked with Quackity, one of Tommy's closest friends. Quackity wore a simple, navy tracksuit jacket zipped up with a high collar and black jeans; he also wore his beanie as per usual. The casual outfit both clashed and matched with the navy masquerade mask with yellow feathers he wore.

He strolled up to them, a smile on their lips appearing as they realized his presence.

"Tomás!" Quackity shouted, giving the blond a quick hug. Tommy wasn't good with affection, but Quackity was always welcome to hug him. He trusted the male almost as much as he trusted Sam, which said a lot.

Tommy turned to Sam and groaned as the bar owner ruffled his hair.

"Ready for tonight?" Sam asked and Tommy nodded.

"I can't wait to sing the new song I'm covering, I practiced it for hours," Tommy spoke, "It's going to be poggers,"

"I know it will be," Sam agreed with a fond smile on his lips, "Go and change in the back, we only have an half an hour before we open,"

Tommy nodded once again before running to the back. He rushed into the backroom, used for performers to change and get ready. He saw George sitting at a vanity, adjusting his white masquerade mask. George wore a less casual outfit than Quackity: A teal sweater over a white dress shirt tucked in black jeans with sneakers.

"Hey, George!" Tommy shouted as he made his way into the bathroom.

"Hey, Tommy!" George shouted back.

Tommy locked the door behind him and opened his backpack, changing into his outfit. He wore a red dress shirt, with gold feather cufflinks on the cuff. The cufflinks were a birthday gift from Sam, he treasured them. He tucked the dress shirt into his black dress pants, wearing red sneakers to match his shirt and mask. He tossed his previous outfit into his backpack, stuffing his phone into his pocket, before exiting the bathroom. He tossed his backpack into his assigned locker and sat at one of the open vanities. He stared at his reflection for a moment, then fixed his hair and mask.

The door of the backroom opening caught his attention. He looked over and saw Minx, who looked tired despite the black and purple masquerade mask covering her eyes. Her back was hunched and movement slow.

"You look like a zombie," Tommy said.

"Shut your mouth," Minx said, "College is sucking the life out of me,"

"That's not poggers,"

"I will wring your neck, Tommy," Minx growled, "Good to see you again, though,"

Minx walked into the bathroom and Tommy turned back around to the mirror on the vanity. He inspected himself once more, checking both his hair and outfit, before leaving the backroom. Minx would lock it after she was done, trying to avoid costumers coming into the space meant for singers. Whoever came last was tasked with that responsibility. He took a look around the bar and noticed how people filed in. It was hard to get used to at first, but Tommy found comfort in it.

This was home.

A well known bar and singers that were as well known as the bar itself.

He found home here, not with his family.

Well, the people here were his family now.

He walked over to the part of the bar reserved for the singers to the far left of the bar near the stage. It was sectioned off with ropes and guarded by Bad, a man that hated cursing but could flip someone over his shoulder easily. He worked here with his platonic partner, Skeppy, who managed drinks with Ponk and Charlie. The other guard was Punz, who surveyed the whole bar with Sam for any sign of trouble or harassment.

"Hey, Bad!" Tommy said, "How's it going, big man?"

"Good," Bad responded, "A bit tired, though,"

"Are you ever going to tell me the worst word you know?" Tommy asked, causing Bad to sigh.

"No, you muffin head, this is the hundredth time you asked,"

"I'll get you to one day," Tommy said, much to Bad's dismay, before entering the roped off section. There was one long table with a few chairs, due to the bar only having five singers in total. At the table, he could see Eret on their phone. Eret wore a rose gold crown on top of their head and royal cape, matching their stage name, "Monarch". Underneath the cape, Eret wore a strawberry dress and black heeled boots which they wore despite being tall as fuck. Their masquerade mask was rose gold, with a pink flower and feathers resting on left side of it.

"Hey, Phoenix!" Eret greeted as Tommy approached.

"Ayup, Monarch," Tommy said, sitting down across from the other singer.

Since the bar was open, they referred to each other by stage names. The masquerade theme for the singers was a fun gimmick, but also protected their privacy. To all the singers here, this bar was an escape where they could be the person they wish they could be outside of it. That's why most of them kept their identities secret, or why most of them only told a few people where they worked, they didn't want this small world to be ruined. A world where they could wear masks and pretend their problems didn't exist at all. They didn't want to be recognized in public or have their friends come to the bar and somehow slip their identity.

Tommy had started the tradition of the mask, being underage and working in a well-known bar, he needed to keep his identity secret. The other singers followed suit, and found comfort and meaning in their masks. Despite Quackity and Minx not using stage names, they felt a freedom while they wore their masks. They were a symbol of secrecy before, but they became a symbol of their true selves.

"Did you see the schedule in the group chat?" Eret asked, Tommy nodded.

The bar set the schedule so each singer would sing for twenty minutes in a certain order. There were ten minute breaks between every performance, enough time for the next singer to prepare any instruments or do vocal exercises before their turn.

Each singer was special, showing their unique vocal tone and personality through their music. Eret had a deep, powerful voice that lulled you into his words. Minx was the only female singer, with a nice range and strong emotion in her voice. Quackity tended to sing more light hearted songs that made you dance, with the occasional emotional song that people often didn't expect. He sang in Spanish as well, dazzling people whether they spoke the language or not. George had a melodic voice, a voice that made you stop and pay attention to him. Tommy had a loud and powerful voice, that's what everyone said. Tommy sang ballads because of that, songs with strong vocals and

delivery.

"Yup, I'm going last again," Tommy huffed.

Tommy normally had the last performance of the night, before the bar closed. The bar closed at one thirty, then one of the others or Sam himself would drive him home. It was late, but Tommy stayed up late anyway. He found it hard to sleep most days. He would have nightmares about what happened the day he met Sam, so he'd go without sleep or go to Ranboo's house for cuddles. The shifts after the bar did help him sleep sometimes, as he was tired after his shifts, but if he couldn't sleep then he couldn't.

"Have to save the best for last," They spoke, a smile on their lips.

Tommy rolled his eyes, saying a few words in disagreement, before taking out his phone. It was eight at night on a Friday, Tommy worked on Friday and the Weekends, as did most of the other singers. The other singers were trying to make money while in college. Tommy was the only one still in high school, eleventh grade to be exact, and they treated him like a baby despite his annoyance at their coddling.

It made him happy that they cared for much though.

He checked his texts and noticed a few messages in the group chat with his best friends, and queer platonic partners, Tubbo and Ranboo.

"Let us know when you get home," Tubbo had sent.

"Yeah, or else Tubbo won't let you out of his sight tomorrow," Ranboo sent after.

Tommy would never admit it, but he smiled whenever they sent him messages like this.

"I'm a big man, I'll be fine," Tommy typed, "But I will, since you're both clingy,"

He sent the message, before locking his phone. Tubbo and Ranboo didn't know where he worked, he knew they would be worried if they did, but they did know he worked late.

Tommy shifted his focus to the bar, looking at the tables that filled the middle of the bar. Most of the tables were already filled, as expected. Since the singers mostly came Friday through Sunday, the business especially boomed during those days. Tommy's eyes trailed to the bar, where Skeppy and Ponk served drinks, chatting to the customers. They already were dealing with a larger crowd and it didn't help Foolish wasn't here today.

Tommy's eyes slid over to the stage and noticed Sam was checking the sound equipment with Charlie, who helped with music and lighting. In a few minutes, Eret would go on stage to sing. Tommy didn't say it, but he looked forward to their performances. There was something captivating about the way they sang, deep and soulful. It was as if their voice was the night sky.

He could never be that poetic out loud, or he could hear the coos coming from a mile away.

As Tommy was lost in thought, he didn't notice the rest of the singers approaching. He only noticed after he noticed his name was called, his lips curling up as Quackity sat beside him. Minx sat by Eret and George next to Minx. Tommy noticed that Minx wore black lipstick, her outfit consisting of a black, long sleeved shirt tucked into a purple plaid skirt.

"Hey, Nix," Quackity spoke, "What's the name of the song you're covering?"

"Cut that always bleeds," Tommy answered, Quackity raised a brow.

"Sounds heavy as fuck, man,"

"It kinda is, Big Q, but I really love that song,"

"Well, I can't wait to hear it, I don't have any new songs this week." Quackity leaned back into his chair, "I sent Sam the same song list this week,"

"Me too," George spoke, "I'm working on a new cover, but decided to sing it next week,"

Minx hummed in agreement, "I'm too fucking tired to finish working on a new cover, college is killing me,"

Everyone at the table, except Tommy, agreed with her.

Quackity sighed dramatically, placing a hand on Tommy's shoulder.

"Enjoy it while you still can," Quackity said, "You'll enter a world of student loans and wondering if you can sell your soul to pass,"

"I know," Tommy groaned, "You've told me this how many times already?"

"A bunch," Eret answered with a slight chuckle.

"Thanks for the answer, prick," Tommy grumbled.

A cleared throat interrupted their conversation, they all looked over and saw Sam standing there.

"Time to perform, Monarch,"

Eret stood from their seat, patting their strawberry dress down before striding over to the stage. On the stage was a microphone stand and a chair for Eret, who found it hard to stand in their heels the whole time. Tommy watched as they took the stage, grabbing the microphone from the stand, before sitting down. The lights aimed at the stage brightened and Tommy could only stare at how Eret's dress twinkled underneath that light.

The bright lights aimed at the stage contrasted with the over all dim lights of the bar, easily catching the attention of most.

"The first performance will start," Sam announced, "Everyone, please welcome Monarch to the stage,"

The audience clapped and cheered, Eret smiled.

"Thank you, everyone, I'll be singing "King" by Sarah Kinsley first," Eret stated, "Hope you enjoy,"

A deep, melodic voice started singing and the night rushed by.

It felt like a blur, feeling more like a concert than an actual job most of the time. Tommy loved sitting there and watching his friends sing almost as much as he loved singing himself. He could only laugh as Quackity sang a song he dedicated to Bad. He sang about Bad robbing some orphans, which caused the whole bar to laugh. Bad could only stand there in horror and slight amusement. The guard almost tackled Quackity when he came down from the stage.

"Oh my god, Bad's attacking me!" Quackity cried out.

"You muffin-head, I hate you so much,"

"No you don't!" Quackity responded, a smirk on his lips as he hugged Bad.

Bad could only sigh and accept his fate, forever tormented by Quackity.

It was a rather cute sight, and it hurt Tommy's eyes.

"Guys, really?" Tommy complained. "I can't sing if I throw up,"

"Any askers?" Bad said and Quackity practically screeched.

"Oh my god, Badboyhalo, oh my god,"

Tommy could even hear George shout as well.

Why did he work with these people?

Tommy rolled his eyes as Quackity hugged Bad, who stood in his arms contemplating his life.

"You're such a bitch, Bad,"

"Hey, language!" Bad yelled.

"Fuck, shit, bitch!" Tommy yelled back, continuing to list curse words despite Bad's threats to pick him up like a child.

"You won't, Bitchboyhalo!"

In the end, Bad picked him up like he was an angry cat.

Tommy ignored how his ears burned from embarrassment.

Eventually, the end of the night came. Tommy took a deep breath, ready to finish off the night with his song. Sam waved him over and he stood up from his seat. He smiled at the encouraging words his friends gave before he walked on stage. Tommy moved the microphone stand to the side, taking the microphone out, before taking a seat on the chair behind him. He looked to the side and Charlie gave him a thumbs up after brightening the lights, everything was ready.

"Sorry to say, but this is the last performance of the night, everyone please cheer for Phoenix!" Sam spoke, the crowd cheered loudly. "He will be singing, "Cut that always bleeds" by Conan Gray,"

Tommy raised the microphone to his lips as the music started, trying to play off his nerves with a confident smirk.

Fake it until you make it.

He took one last breath before closing his eyes and beginning to sing:

"I don't love you anymore. A pretty line that I adore, five words that I've heard before. 'Cause you keep me on a rope and tied a noose around my throat. You're gone then back at my door,"

Before his brothers left to college, Tommy could only watch as they pushed him away. They would

hang out with him one moment, before dismissing him for someone else. It burned, knowing he was a backup plan, something that could be used to pass the time when they had nothing else to do.

'Cause if you're gonna leave, better leave, better do it fast. Can't live a little longer sitting on your lap 'cause you know what you're doin' when you're comin' back, and I don't wanna have another heart attack,"

The push and pull of the family dynamic fucked with Tommy. He never had his father's attention, but he expected his brothers to stick by him. They didn't. They treated him as an annoyance and then expected him to forgive and forget. Eventually, he pushed them away. It was better than the pain of being a last resort, the last option picked. It was better than being stabbed over and over again with the same blade.

"Oh, I can't be your lover on a leash, every other week, when you please. Oh, I can't be the kiss that you don't need, the lie between your teeth,"

Tommy knew the song was romantic, but he still resonated with that feeling. He didn't want to be Tommy, he didn't want to be the annoying, loud brother that was never thought of. He didn't want another forgotten birthday, or lonely holiday. He wanted his family, but they didn't want him. So, he stopped trying.

In the end, he found another family that actually cared where he ended up.

"The cut that always bleeds," He sang.

Even though he had his new family, there was still a wound. It couldn't be closed by anyone, even by the people who ripped it open. The neglect, the insecurity, the pain. The cut was torn and hollowed into him with all those feelings.

Tommy continued singing, his voice trembling with emotion. He sang the lyrics from the heart, because they resonated in a way he couldn't even describe.

"But even though you're killing me, yeah, I need you like the air I breathe. I need, I need you more than me. I need you more than anything,"

He sang the lines with all the pain he felt, with all those emotions he bottled up. Singing had always been an outlet, something to do when the voices grew too much and the world grew too painful.

He let out all of those old feelings he didn't allow himself to feel.

He needed his family, they were supposed to be there and protect them. He wanted them to love him, he needed them more than anything, yet they always failed him. When was the last time his brothers called? When was the last time his father acknowledged him? When was the last time he felt loved by them? It hurt, twisting into his gut like a knife whenever he thought of it. Yet, despite all that pain, he knew deep down he wanted them to be there.

His voice trembled as he sang, "Please, please..."

Tommy always felt like he had to beg for attention, to beg for love. He was a vulnerable mess two years ago, just a freshman who had no idea where his life would go. He was alone, his family leaving him as if he were nothing but trash.

Tommy always wondered if it was because their mom died because of him.

That if he wasn't born, would they be happier?

But, he figured out that wasn't right.

He didn't choose to be born.

Tommy was born into this world and he would stay out of spite.

He had a new family now, and even though they couldn't replace the hole his father and brothers left, they were everything he could have asked for. The wound would never close, but it didn't need to. It was a reminder of his strength, that he was moving past his hurt.

He had Sam, he had Tubbo and Ranboo, he had so many people that found him valuable and important.

"Oh, I could be anything you need as long as you don't leave. The cut that always—,"

The music suddenly ended and so did his voice.

It was left unfinished, without a proper ending, like with him and his family.

And, that was fine.

He didn't need the perfect ending with them.

Before he could open his eyes, the applause startled him. Despite working here for a year, he was never quite used to the applause and acknowledgement by the customers. He wasn't used to being celebrated or cheered.

Tommy stood, placing the microphone back on the stand, before bowing to the crowd. He walked down the stairs that led up to the stage and perked up as he saw Sam. He could see the emotion in Sam's eyes and how he looked both concerned and proud. They both knew what that song meant to Tommy. Tommy had told him things that he never told anyone else but Tubbo and Ranboo about his family. They stood there for a moment, staring at each other before Tommy walked forward and into Sam's arms. The bar owner hugged him tightly and Tommy felt safe. He felt loved. He felt wanted.

That's all he ever wanted.

"That was amazing, Tommy!" Charlie said, interrupting the small moment between Tommy and Sam. "I almost cried!"

"Thanks, Charlie," Tommy huffed out a laugh between his words. He pulled away from Sam, waving to the two, before heading back to the table with all his friends.

On the way there, he heard compliments tossed at him, which he thanked in return.

Tommy saw Bad's face and knew what was about to happen.

The guard hugged-borderline-tackled him with tears in his eyes. He let it happen because he knew how Bad was, he was one of the kindest people he knew. Tommy sighed and hugged the guard back, relenting to the affection.

"Stop hogging him, Bad!" Quackity yelled.

Bad let go of Tommy and the blond was pulled into a group hug by all the singers.

They all knew when someone sung from the heart, especially Tommy. He needed the hugs, singing that song made him remember so many things that hurt, but at the same time it healed him.

"I'm so glad you're with us, Tommy," Quackity whispered, Tommy knew it was true.

He was in a bad mental state when he met most of them. It took time to get him out of that, they all watched him change and get better, especially Quackity and Sam.

That's how he knew Quackity meant every word he said.

The bar closed, the last of the customers leaving. It was one thirty in the morning, and he had changed out of his clothes, slipping on the hoodie and jeans he arrived in. He walked out of backroom and Quackity gestured him to follow.

"You're taking me home tonight, Big Q?"

"Sí, mi mapache," Quackity responded, "Let's go,"

"Are you ever going to tell me what that means?"

"No,"

Tommy sighed and followed Quackity out, hugging Sam before he left.

"Stay safe," Sam said.

"I will, Sam, you better stay safe too,"

Tommy hopped into Quackity's car, sitting back in the passenger seat after buckling his seat belt. The drive was calm, music blasting from the radio as they hummed along. Tommy looked over at Quackity who stared at the road, nodding his head to the music.

Tommy never expected to get so close to him.

He was glad he opened up to Quackity.

He would never regret it.

The car stopped and Tommy turned his head to his house. He stared at his "home" for a few moments, reluctance etched on his face.

"Tomás?" Quackity spoke with concern intricately laced into his tone, "Mi mapache?"

"Sorry, I'll go," Tommy said, grabbing his backpack from the place it rested at his feet. "Thanks for the ride,"

Tommy ignored the concern in his friend's eyes and hurried up to his house. He took the key out of his backpack and opened the door, before closing it behind him. Tommy sighed and snuck to his room, despite the fact Phil didn't care. He locked his room door behind him and jumped on his bed after sliding his backpack under his bed with his other hidden belongings, texting Ranboo and Tubbo he had gotten home. He grabbed his charger and plugged in his phone, laying back after he was done.

Then, a wave of fatigue hit him, and for once he was sure he could sleep.

He closed his eyes and prayed nothing came to him in his dreams.

When he opened his eyes, it was morning and his alarm was ringing. He groaned and shut off his alarm, cursing in his mind. He loved to hang out with his platonic partners, but it sucked when they had to hang out early because he worked at night. Tommy knew Sam would give him the day off if he asked, but Tommy genuinely loved what he did and so he was willing to wake up early. He could always hang out or sleep over during the week.

He couldn't work on Sunday, though.

He promised Tubbo and Ranboo he would sleep over on the weekend for once.

Tommy slid out of his bed and cringed as he realized he slept in his clothes. He shook his head and left his room, heading to the kitchen to grab himself a coke. Was it healthy? No. Did he care? No.

He almost turned around when he saw his father in the kitchen, cooking breakfast for himself.

Tommy took a deep breath and entered the room. He ignored his father's presence and grabbed his soda, ready to hightail it out of there.

"Tommy?" His father spoke, causing him to freeze.

"Yeah?"

"Your brothers are coming back on Monday,"

Tommy felt his heart drop.

"What?" Was the only word Tommy could say in response, turning back around to face his father.

"They needed a break from college, so they're coming home for a year," Phil explained, "Don't bother them, okay? They're going through a lot,"

Tommy grip on his coke tightened, was he not going through a lot?

Well, Phil never cared to know if he was either way.

"Alright, I won't, bye Phil,"

Tommy stormed out the kitchen, he opened his coke and took a large gulp.

He needed to go to Ranboo's house, now.

Neverland

Chapter Summary

Tommy hangs out with his friends and then sings his heart out at his job.

He's not looking forward to Monday.

TW// hints at self-harm, accidental injury, and blood mention.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy stormed into his room, his breath heavy and hands shaking. He didn't know what to think, what to feel. He felt a bitterness that enveloped the middle of his chest, the cut inside him prying itself open more.

Tommy knew his brothers would come back, realistically, but he always tried to keep the thought shoved in the back of mind. He didn't want to acknowledge it. Yet, here they were, coming back after the years of ignoring and leaving him. It stung, like salt in a wound. There was some part of him that hoped that they would come back and act different, but if the lack of calls said anything, then Tommy doubted they would.

Tommy didn't want to see them. He didn't want to go through a cycle of false hope and pain again, he didn't want to be reminded of everything he pushed back into the deep recesses of his mind.

He didn't want to get hurt again.

He didn't want to go back to how he was years ago.

Tommy's mental state was horrible, especially due to what was happening around that time...

The blond shook his head, fists clenching.

He didn't need to remember that.

Tommy grabbed his phone and checked the time, knowing it was time for him to go. He changed his clothes and brushed his teeth, haphazardly styling his hair before walking out the door. Tommy walked to Ranboo's house, his hands in his hoodie pocket. His mind was moving a mile a minute, still processing the news he had gotten a mere thirty minutes ago. As his feet met the sidewalk, he wondered how he would even react when he did see them. How would they react?

He didn't think he could handle them looking at him like an insignificant bug again.

Tommy knew he was overthinking, but to be fair, it had been around two years or more since he's seen them. They left to college while he was still in freshman year, going to the same one as if to taunt him more. They needed each other, not him, that was clear enough from the lack of visits or contact. Tommy didn't expect them to run away so quickly, he didn't expect them to abandon him

Phil and him. Yet, despite the poor excuses he would hear as Phil pleaded for them to come for the holidays, they were still his father's favorites.

Last Christmas, Tommy didn't spend it at home. He sang holiday songs at his job instead of celebrating with Phil. When he came back, there were no presents for him underneath the tree, but there had been a few for his brothers. Tommy pretended his eyes didn't tear up, but he remembered the gifts his new family had gotten him. They sat in his backpack, warming his frozen heart. He sat in his room, taking out the presents.

Earlier in the day, Tubbo had brought all of them matching compass necklaces. Tommy always wore his under his shirt outside of work, comforted by metal against his chest whenever times were tough. Ranboo had brought Tommy a leather bound notebook to write songs in. At first, Tommy was apprehensive, he had never written his own music before. However, Ranboo asked him to give it chance, he knew the blond could sing and it could be a good outlet for his feelings. Despite that, Tommy had never sang any of his written songs, instead keeping them to himself. Tommy had brought Ranboo a fountain pen, which Ranboo always wanted to try using for his journal, and Tubbo a video game he mentioned wanting. Tommy had even brought a present for Ranboo's brother, Michael. The little boy loved shiny things, so Tommy had brought him a golden crown and a few toys. The crown had been Michael's favorite. It was just a shiny, plastic crown, but Michael didn't take it off for weeks, grumbling every time he had to. Michael had said the crown reminded him of Tommy's golden hair, and no, Tommy did not tear up. He didn't.

After he went to work, he had received two more presents. He took out the camera that Sam and everyone had pitched in for. They also had brought him a photo album, to store the photos he took. The two items sat underneath the bed, along with his backpack and a box filled with money he had earned, hiding them so Phil couldn't find them. The items were covered by the red quilt that hung low enough to conceal the underneath area of the bed. He didn't need Phil taking his money, Tommy had worked hard to earn every dollar. He planned to save up so he could move out and live with Tubbo and Ranboo after they graduated. His platonic partners also worked during the summer to save up for that dream as well. He didn't want the camera or photo album to be touched either. Those two things were sacred to him. They reminded him of the happiness he felt despite the neglect from his family. They were snippets into the life his father and brothers were unaware of and Tommy wanted to keep it that way.

The photo album had tons of photos stored within it now. From the time he went to the park with his platonic partners and Michael, to the time that Charlie had made a bucket of slime at his house. Everyone from work came over as it was the man's birthday, and somehow a slime fight happened. Quackity had tossed the slime as a joke, but it landed on Sam. Everyone froze, not saying a word, until the green haired man grabbed a handful of slime and tossed it at Quackity. A whole war started after that. Tommy remembered how Punz hid under the table as Charlie grabbed the bucket, tossing all the slime in the air causing a splash of slime to cover most of them. He could never hold back a smile as he remembered wiping his hands clean, grabbing his camera from his backpack and taking a picture of everyone. Everyone had smiles, slime coating some part of their body.

"How the fuck am I supposed to get this out my hair?" Minx growled, tossing slime from her hair at the floor.

"So, are you guys going to help me clean up, or?" Charlie asked and everyone looked horrified as they looked around the house.

They spent hours cleaning Charlie's house and then themselves the best they could after that.

That was one of his favorite memories.

Tommy sighed, he stopped walking and stared at Ranboo's house. He walked up to the door, knocking a special pattern. The boys always knocked in that pattern so they could know it was each other, and not someone else. Tommy could hear the sound of footsteps rushing to the door and he knew who it was. The door ripped open and there stood Michael, a beaming smile on his face. Tommy could only smile as the six year old child hugged him.

Michael had his crown and eyepatch on. The eyepatch was worn when Michael played a game called pirate king, but the child was also blind in that one eye. Ranboo had cheered his brother up after he was teased for being blind in his eye. He said Michael was like a pirate and it stuck. The boy had been obsessed with pirates since then, claiming they had a blind eye and still were tough enough to fight off bad guys.

"Tommy!" Michael said, bouncing, "Wanna play?"

"Maybe later, Big M, have to talk with Ranboo and Tubbo first,"

Michael pouted but nodded, stepping aside to let Tommy in. The blond strolled in and closed the door behind himself, hurrying upstairs to go into Ranboo's room. As he approached the door, he heard his best friends talking and smiled, opening the door.

"Hey, bitches!" Tommy entered the room, his partners rushed up from the bed and hugged him.

"What's wrong?" Tubbo asked, Tommy furrowed his brows.

"What? How do you know-"

"Your lip," Tubbo interrupted, "It's bleeding,"

Tommy licked his bottom lip and was met with a metallic taste. He had a bad habit of biting his lip when stressed, he didn't even notice it most of time unless he bit down too hard. He sighed as his boys dragged him to the bed, being sat between them.

"Phil told me my brothers are coming back," Tommy spoke, his best friends tensing up.

"What?" Both said.

Tommy huffed out a dry laugh, "Yeah, that's what I said. I still can't believe it,"

"Do you know when?" Ranboo asked and Tommy nodded.

"Monday,"

Ranboo wrapped his arm around Tommy's shoulders, pulling the boy into his side. Tubbo grasped Tommy's hand in his own, his eyes filled with worry and anger. They knew the situation between Tommy and his brothers well. Tommy had told them almost everything about his family and they treated him. The blond had cried over his family too many times, how couldn't they know?

"I don't want to see them," Tommy spoke, "I know they'll just ignore me, or only talk to me when they feel like it. I worked too hard to fix my life for them to just come back after all these years, I don't want to go back to how I was before. I never want to be that depressed again,"

Tommy ignored how his eyes burned.

His partners said nothing, continuing to hold onto him protectively.

"You know, I missed them so much despite everything," Tommy confessed, "But, I don't know

how they're going to act towards me. I don't know if they'll be nice, or if we'll get into arguments like before,"

The arguments Tommy had with them were horrible, both sides saying things they never apologized for. Tommy never meant them, but he wasn't sure if his brothers had meant them or not. Either way, he didn't need that in his life again. The arguments always took everything out of him and sometimes would leave him in his room alone, hyperventilating and crying.

He had been clean for around almost half a year.

Tommy didn't want to relapse.

"I'll kill them if you want," Tubbo said, Tommy laughed, but he knew Tubbo would really commit a crime if it meant Tommy or Ranboo would be happy.

"How about this? Instead of murder," Tubbo boomed him, calling the taller boy boring, "Whenever you need to get out of that house, you can come over. I don't care if it's three in the morning, Tommy, you always have a safe place here,"

"Thanks, boo," Tommy said, cuddling further into Ranboo's side.

"Now, how about we watch a movie on my laptop?" Ranboo asked, Tommy nodded and they shifted positions on the bed. They all leaned against the headboard, Tommy sitting in the middle with the laptop sat on his thighs. The boys picked a random movie and Tommy didn't pay much attention. He focused on the hands holding his own and how he felt safe. Something he couldn't even dream of during freshman year of high school.

"We love you Tommy," Tubbo said, Tommy smiled.

"Love you too,"

Tommy gagged at cheesy moments, but for some reason, he couldn't bother to hate it when it came from his best friends.

Call him biased if you want, he doesn't care.

The movie continued on, eventually Michael ran into the room.

"Can we play?"

The boys looked at each other before sliding out of Ranboo's bed. An intense game of pirate king then ensued. Prince Tommy was kidnapped by the horrible pirate, Captain Beebeard. Michael, the Pirate King, had to save Tommy from his evil clutches with his first mate, Ranboo. Tommy sat in a treehouse in the backyard, staring out the window with a fond smile as Michael held a wooden sword. Ranboo held a nerf gun and Tubbo had his own wooden sword.

"Give me back, Prince Tommy!" Michael yelled, pointed at Tubbo with the sword.

"Never! He belongs to me!" Tubbo cackled evilly, selling the performance rather well.

"First mate Ranboo, shoot!"

Ranboo shot at Tubbo, who dramatically dodged the bullets. Tubbo ran forward and attacked Ranboo, hitting him lightly with the sword.

"Oh no!" Ranboo said, falling to the ground, "He got me!"

"No! Ranboo!" Michael yelled, "I'll- uh... what's the word?"

"Avenge?" Ranboo spoke and Michael nodded.

"Yeah, I'll avenge you!" Michael said, "Time to attack!"

Michael ran forward, hitting Tubbo in the leg with his sword. The brunet fell down as well, pretending to grunt in pain. Micheal tapped him with the sword a couple of more times, before he dropped it. He ran over to the treehouse.

"Prince Tommy, Beebeard is dead!" Michael yelled, "I saved you!"

Tommy hurried down the treehouse, picking up the child and hugging him. He spun Michael around, the child in his arms giggling.

"My hero!" Tommy said, "You saved me, Pirate King!"

"All in a days work!" Michael said, a bright smile on his face.

If his coworkers saw this, they would have a field day seeing Tommy acting so soft. He didn't care though, it would be a small price to pay for making Michael happy.

The boys played a little longer, changing roles here and there. Eventually, they went back inside, cleaning up and eating lunch together. Michael took a small nap after an hour, tired from all the playing done in the backyard. Tommy hung out with Ranboo and Tubbo until the clock struck seven thirty.

"I should go, I need to go work soon," Tommy said, trying to wiggle away from the boys who cuddled into him.

"You're going to be fine, right?" Tubbo asked.

"I'm a big man, I'll be fine enough to go to work," Tommy reassured, "I can't skip today, I'm already skipping tomorrow,"

Tubbo and Ranboo didn't let go of him. Tommy struggled for five minutes, barely managing to slip out of their grips.

"We're not letting you go tomorrow,"

"I know, Tubbo, tomorrow I'll be with you all day,"

Tommy gave them hugs before walking downstairs, he opened the front door and walked out. He walked home, ignore the sounds of his father in the kitchen, and heading into his room. He grabbed his backpack and checked he had everything before heading back out. He slipped out as per usual, ready to walk to his job.

His mind wanders again as he walks to work.

He remembered the days before his brothers left. They had mentioned their departure a week prior, and Tommy didn't bother to argue about it. He simply rushed out of the dining room seat, heading into his room, and crying. As much as he resented them, how they pushed and pulled him out of their life, they were still his brothers. He still cared for them even if the same couldn't be said back for certain.

They didn't talk at all during the week left. Tommy slid past them, and his brothers ignored him

either way. They were too busy packing their bags and double checking they had everything before they left. Finally, the day of came, and Tommy stood in front of them. The brothers had their belongings packed into the car. Phil was ready to leave, keys in hand and eyes were red from the few tears he let out.

"Well, see you later, Toms," Wilbur said, the blond nodded.

"Don't cause too much trouble for dad,"

The boys turned to leave. Tommy bit his lip, debating the words that he wanted to say. As Wilbur turned and waved, about to close the door, Tommy spoke.

"I'll miss you,"

Techno didn't even glance in his direction, leaving a split second after his words. Wilbur only gave him a strained smile before closing the door. Tommy blinked, his body stiff yet hands shaking. He could feel the tears well up in his eyes. His eyes were on fire and throat closed shut, a whimper escaping his lips.

They didn't even say it back.

Tommy wobbled into the kitchen, grabbing a glass to pour some water in. His fingers shook and the glass slipped out of his hands, shattering against the floor like all of Tommy's hopes. Tommy screamed, grasping at his hair and kneeling on the floor, somehow managing to dodge the glass.

He was alone...

He had no one.

Even his brothers wouldn't miss him.

Tommy tried to clean up the glass through hazy vision, but grasped a piece too hard. It dug into his hand rather deeply, causing him to cry out and yank the glass out of his hand. He watched as the blood trickled down his hand, dropping on to the floor. Tommy's thoughts left the negativity of his situation and focused on the throbbing pain in his palm. It was the gateway to what he would do to his arms in the future.

It was an escape, a change of focus.

He was glad he didn't do it anymore, it was an unhealthy coping mechanism.

Tommy sat there for five minutes, staring at the blood and then snapped out of it. He cleaned up the glass and blood, before stumbling into the bathroom, wrapping his hand in bandage from a first aid kit. He put the kit back away, staring at his reflection. He looked like a mess, his eyes were redder than Phil's. He walked out the bathroom and into his room, where he laid in his bed and curled up into a fetal position.

His sniffles filled the room.

He started his freshman year alone weeks later.

Tommy still had a slight scar on his right palm, an almost unnoticeable reminder of that day.

Tommy stopped his movements, realizing how close he was getting to the bar. He took out the mask and slipped it on, continuing his walk. Tommy tried to ignore the rest of the memories that

tried to bubble up and increased his pace. Tommy entered the bar, his breath heavy and body tired.

"Tommy?"

Tommy turned to Sam, who had a concerned look in his eyes.

Could everyone tell something was wrong?

"Are you okay?"

Tommy bit his lip and shook his head, "I guess not,"

Sam sighed, grasping the boy by the hand and taking him out back. They stood behind the bar and Tommy didn't speak for a few moments.

"What's wrong, kid?"

"My brothers are coming back,"

Sam froze, Tommy expected that reaction.

"I... don't know how to feel,"

Sam sighed, "Do you still want to perform? You can just sit out today-"

"No!" Tommy interrupted, "I still want to,"

Sam gave him a look, but pulled the teen into his arms and giving him a tight hug. Tommy sniffled into Sam's chest, ignoring how tears formed in the corner's of his eyes. They stood there for a few minutes before they let go of each other.

"Thanks... dad..." Tommy whispered the last word, Sam could still hear it though.

Tommy was forced into another hug, Tommy could feel a wet sensation on his shoulder but didn't comment on it. This wasn't the first time he had called Sam that, but it always led to the same reaction. Sam would cry and Tommy would hug him tightly.

The first time he called Sam, "dad", was a slip. He didn't know how Sam would react. Sam had a tough image, nicknamed warden due to being a bit strict on the rules, but he cried. He cried and hugged Tommy, the blond in shock in his arms. He told Tommy he had never wanted children until he met him. Tommy didn't know how to feel, but they stayed in each others' arms for awhile. Tommy wished Sam could adopt him at times, but he could never say that out loud.

That was too much to ask.

"Come on, get ready before we open,"

Sam turned away, wiping his face, before gesturing the teen to follow.

They parted ways and Tommy headed into the backroom, changing before heading to the singer area. He noticed everyone was there, except Minx, who must've been coming later as per usual. She was never late, but she always came closer to opening than the others. Tommy greeted everyone, smiling as Quackity stood up to give him a hug.

"Tomás, I missed you,"

"Missed you too, Big Q,"

They talked for awhile before the bar opened, Minx eventually showing up to sit with them.

"Uh, I've got something to tell everyone," Tommy spoke, he figured he should let them know.

"What is it?" George asked, eyes furrowed at the sudden change of mood.

"My brothers are coming back-"

Before he could finish, the table interrupted into chaos. The table looked like a mob, armed with pitchforks and torches, ready to storm out of their workplace and attack Tommy's brothers. Tommy hadn't told them all as much as Sam or his partners, but he explained the reasons he was so bad when he first met them. Needless to say, it only made them all more protective.

"I'll kill them," Minx said, everyone else agreed.

"I can't believe I used to be friends with Wilbur, that pendejo," Quackity scowled.

"Guys!" Tommy tried to calm the chaos, "Look, it's fine, I'd just thought I'd tell you,"

"If you need a hitman, I know a guy," Quackity said.

"I do too," Eret said, a smile on their lips.

Tommy stared at Eret in surprise.

"You know-" Tommy shook his head, "No, we're not murdering my brothers, even if they are fucking pricks,"

"Fine, it sucks they're coming back, though," George said.

"Look, let's not talk about this anymore," Tommy said, "We have a job to do,"

The night went well, everyone singing and Tommy losing himself in the music. His head bobbed and shoulders moved as he sat in seat, the corners of mouth rising as everyone sang from the heart.

It wasn't the end of night yet, but it was his turn. Tommy walked up to the stage and sat, microphone in hand. He looked out the crowd, smiling at the few cheers he got.

"Phoenix will be singing, Lost Boy by Ruth B, everyone cheer for him please!" Charlie spoke, taking over the announcements for the day.

The lights brightened and Tommy was ready. The music started and Tommy closed his eyes, gently swaying to the piano playing. He brought the microphone to his lips and sang, diffusing all his worries away into the air.

"There was a time when I was alone. No where to go and no place to call home. My only friend was the man in the moon and even sometimes he would go away too," Tommy started, "Then one night, as I closed my eyes, I saw a shadow flying high. He came to me with the sweetest smile, told me he wanted to talk for a while,"

Sam was his shining light in a dark time, like his very own Peter Pan, taking him away from the pain he had before. He didn't have to let him in that rainy night, he could have turned and walked away like everyone in Tommy's life. Instead, he reached his hand out, and pulled Tommy out from the pain he was drowning in. Tommy didn't tell him much that night, still scared, but whispered a

few things to him. It gave the bar owner enough context. For the first time in awhile, Tommy felt listened to. He felt believed.

"He said Peter Pan that's what they call me. I promise that you'll never be lonely and ever since that day..."

Tommy didn't know that day would change his life. He didn't know that hand he grabbed could become a father figure for him. He didn't know he would be friends with his coworkers or how he would end up being platonic partners and best friends with the boys he worked on a project for class with. It's like that day was the catalyst for all the good things that came into his life.

"I am a Lost Boy from Neverland. Usually hanging out with Peter Pan, and when we're bored we play in the Woods. Always on the run from Captain Hook,"

Tommy felt his home was here, or at either of his partners' houses. However, never at his actual home. Instead, he would leave his house to go to Neverland, places where he actually felt love and care. Away from the uncaring eyes of his father, and the empty bedrooms where that brothers left behind in pursuit of something greater. Tommy didn't understand at first, but when he found something greater for himself, he didn't want to go home either.

"Run run Lost Boy, they say to me, away from all of reality. Neverland is home to lost boys like me, and lost boys like me are free. Neverland is home to lost boys like me, and lost boys like me are free,"

Tommy remembered how his feet pounded against the ground as he ran. He didn't want to think about what happened, or what could of if he didn't scratch that person's face with his fingers. It still gave him nightmares. He still couldn't stand the smell of ice cream as well, or it would trigger a panic attack. It sucked, he used to love the cold treat, but he couldn't eat it anymore. He had trauma, but that's what therapy sessions with Puffy on Tuesday's were for. Yet, despite the trauma, the horrible event gave him the chance to run and he ran into a future where he was happy. He was lost and still is, but he was also found.

"He sprinkled me in pixie dust and told me to believe. Believe in him and believe in me. Together we will fly away in a cloud of green, to your beautiful destiny. As we soared above the town that never loved me, I realized I finally had a family. Soon enough we reached Neverland, peacefully my feet hit the sand and ever since that day..."

It was a long time before trusted Sam fully. It took less than half of the year he worked there before he came to the realization he trusted Sam. Sam didn't try to force his trust, he proved it through his actions. He allowed Tommy to take his time, to believe in him at his own pace. Slowly, Tommy opened up to Sam, then all of them. They became his family, supporting him unconditionally. Tommy could always escape from his home lacking love, the world that hated him, into Neverland.

"Peter Pan, Tinker Bell, Wendy darlin, even Captain Hook, you are my perfect story book,"

Everyone at the bar were part of a family, welcoming him with open arms. He couldn't live without any of them, even Punz who always remarked he would run off if he found a better job. Yet, Tommy heard him deny a job offer over the phone that would have been better. Tommy snuck away, watching as Punz came back into the bar, looking exasperated but smiling at the chaos in the bar.

"Neverland, I love you so, you are now my home sweet home, forever a lost boy at last,"

He remembered the first time singing this song, he could see the emotional eyes locking on to him. In a way, this was his confession, he was admitting to them that he loved them. The near back-shattering cuddles he got when he came down the stage were overwhelming, yet he couldn't bare to separate himself from them. He loved them, touch-starved and vulnerable. He didn't care if the bar watched, he felt like he was in his own world.

"Neverland is home to Lost Boys like me, and Lost Boys like me are free,"

Tommy end the song, opening his eyes. He watched as some people in the club teared up, hugging their friends in a drunken clumsiness that Tommy could only smile at. He stood from the chair, bowing, before walking down the steps of the stage. Tommy sat back down with his fellow singers and smiled as Quackity wrapped an arm around his shoulders. Tommy had to hunch a little to make it work.

"I still get emotional when you sing that song, mi mapache,"

Tommy teasingly rolled his eyes, "I know, Big Q,"

A hand tousled his hair and then Quackity pulled away.

The rest of the night went smoothly, Eret took the final song this time. They sang, "In Case You Don't Live Forever" by Ben Platt. Tommy could only stare at Eret in awe, as usual. The deep voice gently caressed his ears and brought him into the song. Eret made eye contact with him, or he assumed they did because they faced in his direction. A smile on their lips as he sang, "I love you more than you'll ever wrap your head around,"

After everything was over, Tommy changed and stood around. Normally, someone would offer to drive him home, so he waited until someone said they could.

"You can come with me," Eret said, a smile on their lips. Tommy nodded, backpack thrown over one shoulder as he followed the brunet out of the bar. He waved to everyone he passed by, saying his goodbyes.

He slid into the car, buckling himself in and tossing the backpack at his feet. Eret started their car, and they were off.

"Tommy?" Eret spoke after some time.

"Yeah, Big E?"

"If anything happens, you can call me at any time, I'll pick you up," Eret said, "If you can't go to anyone else,"

Tommy nodded his head, "Thanks, Big E, I will,"

The streetlights whirred by, gently illuminating the way. The open car window brought in wind that gently pet Tommy's hair.

"I'm serious, Tommy, we care so much about you." Eret turned the wheel, rounding a corner.

"I know, Eret," Tommy said, "Don't worry,"

Eret nodded, bringing the car to a stop in front of Tommy's house.

"Okay," They said, "Goodnight, Tommy,"

"Night, Eret," Tommy said, slipping out the car and into his "home".

He walked into the house, the lights off and dark. He sighed and took his phone out from his pocket, turning on the flashlight, so he wouldn't bump into anything. He strolled into his room, locking the door as usual, and taking off his backpack. He felt too tired to slide it under the bed, leaving it by the door. He jumped into bed, eyes threatening to close.

He did close them, and went to bed.

One thought popped up before he fell unconscious.

His brothers would be coming back the day after tomorrow.

He was scared.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter the brothers are coming, ruh oh.

Hope you enjoyed!

Welcome Home

Chapter Summary

Tommy hangs out with his platonic partners on Sunday.

Then, he meets up with his brothers the next day.

Surely, it's not too bad, right?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy remembered the faint smell of ice cream in the room. He sat on a counter, legs swinging with a bowl on his thighs. The ice cream had mostly melted into a liquid, only leaving small islands of ice cream remaining. He brought a spoon to his lips, laughing at something said.

Then, the bowl fell to the ground, crashing down and splattering the ice cream all over the ground.

Tommy kicked and screamed. His fingernails digging into any skin it could touch, fighting away the monster that grabbed him. He needed to get out; he needed to be safe, he needed Sam. Where was he? Why wasn't he saving him? Tommy cried as hands yanked at his shirt, before his finally dug his nails into the monster's face. His nails scratched at the face, leaving blood underneath his nails, and then he ran. He crumbled to the ground after twisting his ankle. He tried to crawl away, but hands grabbed his feet and he screamed.

Tommy woke up, his body thrashing.

He needed to leave, he needed someone.

Tommy rushed to Ranboo's house the moment after, tossing clothes and other necessities for spending the night in a bag. He would head straight to school the next day with Ranboo and Tubbo when they woke up. He didn't do this often, due to working Sundays, but he enjoyed waking up and walking to school with his best friends. His mornings were typically lonely, so having a change of pace helped Tommy and the nerves he still felt thinking about his brothers' arrival the next day. He shook his head, he didn't need to think about that now.

He called Ranboo, making sure the boy was awake, before heading over.

It was nine in the morning, an hour or two earlier than he normally went, but his nightmare had him desperate for comfort.

Tommy wore both his school backpack and an old, worn duffel bag filled with his clothes. He knocked the special pattern. Ranboo opened the door after a minute, wearing a hoodie and pajama pants. He gestured for Tommy to follow, and he did, closing the door behind himself. Tommy dropped his bags on the ground by the door and kicked off his sneakers. Ranboo took his place back in the bed, Tubbo would be coming a little later.

Both Tubbo and Ranboo's parents knew about their platonic relationship. They had to explain a lot and answer tons of questions, platonic relationships like theirs were not common after all, but

eventually their parents understood. The blond was relieved that they could act normally without raising brows, but at the same time it felt bitter that he couldn't come out to his own "parent". Tommy didn't bother to tell Phil when the platonic partnership was first established; he doubted his father would care or bother to understand.

He did tell Sam, though.

So in a way, he did get to tell someone who is like a father.

Tommy slid into the bed beside Ranboo. The taller pulled Tommy under his chin, wrapping his arms around the blond's torso. Tommy closed his eyes and enjoyed the affection, relishing in the contact. The blond closed his eyes and allowed his mind to calm.

"Why'd you come over so early?" Ranboo mumbled.

"Nightmare... about what happened,"

Ranboo's grip tightened on him. Tommy nuzzled closer.

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"No, I'm good, big man,"

"Alright, if you're sure... let's go back to sleep then,"

Tommy closed his eyes, resting in the warmth of his friend. They laid together, simply embracing each other's presence. The safety, the warmth, engulfed Tommy into a space where those nightmares couldn't reach him.

Tommy woke up to movement on the bed hours later, a body snuggling up behind him.

"You were cuddling without me?" Tubbo spoke, "Electric chair,"

"I had a nightmare, you clingy bitch," Tommy muttered, cuddling further into Ranboo's embrace.

Tubbo sighed, hugging Tommy from behind. The three boys laid there for a few more moments, but they knew they should get up. It took some convincing for Tommy to let go of Ranboo, the blond making sure to inform his partners they were clingier than him, before letting go.

The rest of the day went by fast, the boys spending time together. They watched movies and played video games, which led to Ranboo getting tackled by Tubbo after beating him in Smash Bros. Tommy cackled as he watched his partners. What would he do without them?

"Ew," Tommy thought, "When did I get so fucking soft?"

However, he forgot about that thought after he was tackled by Tubbo soon after.

The night was soon approaching and Tommy's anxieties grew. It seemed as if the hours passed by in minutes. Tommy knew time didn't stop for anyone, but it was cruel it couldn't go slower. He sat with his boys on Ranboo's bed, watching some videos on YouTube together to end the night. Tommy knew his eyelids were growing heavy, but he rejected sleep. If only sleeping was optional, maybe he wouldn't be on the brink of a panic attack.

"Tommy?" Ranboo spoke, somewhat helping Tommy out of his haze, "Buttercup?"

"Hm?" Tommy looked over at Ranboo.

"What's wrong?"

Tommy didn't say anything for a moment.

"Is it because of tomorrow?" Tubbo asked, Tommy nodded.

Tommy could see the expressions on his partners change, looking at him in concern. If this was the past, Tommy would have felt pitied, but he knew they weren't pitying him. They were genuinely concerned.

"Just nervous, I don't fucking know," Tommy spoke.

There were a few moments of silence.

"I'm just scared to sleep," Tommy spoke, "I don't want to have another nightmare, I don't want to see my brothers either,"

Tommy didn't flinch as arms wrapped around him.

He relished in the warmth of the cuddles, closing his eyes.

"We'll always protect you, Tommy." Tommy could feel Ranboo's fingers move through his hair, "It's okay to sleep,"

Tommy's eyes didn't open as fatigue washed over him.

"Goodnight, buttercup,"

"Night," Tommy murmured.

The feeling of warmth and fingers in his hair were the last things he felt before he fell asleep.

He awoke to an alarm hours later, he tried to move but couldn't. He groaned and opened his eyes to see the ceiling, noticing that he still laid between Ranboo and Tubbo. Tommy sighed and knew it would take him awhile before he could wrestle out of their grasp.

"You clingy bitches, the alarm is going off, we have to get up," Tommy said, "I know you're awake, Tubbo,"

The brunet opened his eyes, a playful smirk on his lips.

"No I'm not,"

"I can literally see your eyes are open, you prick,"

"Hm.... not convinced," Tubbo said.

Tommy would have attacked him if not for Ranboo's arms being wrapped around his waist.

"You're so lucky I'm being held back," Tommy spat, Tubbo laughed.

"Yeah, that's totally what's stopping you,"

"Shut up, bee boy." Tommy turned his head to look at Ranboo, "Let me go, Ranboob,"

"No, thanks," Ranboo said.

"I'll fight both of you!" Tommy yelled, tempted to scream when Ranboo and Tubbo shushed him.

It took another ten minutes and an annoying ringing over and over for the boys to get out of bed. Tommy was the first to enter the bathroom, bringing his duffle bag with him. He changed into a red and white long-sleeved baseball shirt and jeans. He slipped on his sneakers, brushing his teeth and fixing his hair, before exiting.

Ranboo entered after him, leaving a still sleepy Tubbo on the bed. It took another thirty minutes before everyone was finally ready.

As they walked to school, Tommy was comforted by the hands holding his. He allowed his nerves to calm, he allowed his thoughts to move away from his worries and focus on this moment. He at least had this, and no one would take it away from him. The wind brushed his cheeks, rustling his hair, in reassurance. He was safe. He was safe, hand-in-hand with people who cared. He wasn't alone, how could he be as Tubbo and Ranboo laughed at some dumb joke he made.

He was okay.

That's all that mattered.

They entered the school building moments later, small farewells exchanged between them before they parted ways. Tommy felt the hints of anxiousness bubble up, but he popped them, focusing on his journey to class. He spent the rest of the day in blissful ignorance, working and hanging out with his partners. He ignored the inevitable for now, because it was happening regardless of how he felt.

Soon, the last bell rang.

Tommy stood up on his feet, a sigh rushing through his mouth. He walked home alone, shooing his partners away when they approached.

"You don't have to go home alone," Ranboo said, "We can come,"

Tommy shook his head, "No, it's fine,"

Tubbo had an unreadable expression on his face, while Ranboo's stare said enough. Tommy shrugged them off, giving them hugs before he left. Honestly, Tommy was regretting not taking the offer, but it was too late. He trudged home, unaware if his brothers were already there, or coming later. Questions fired off in his head. Would they look different? Would they act different? Would it be a good thing if they were different?

"Fuck," was the only coherent word in the jumble of Tommy's mind.

The blond walked up to his front door, spotting his father's car in the driveway early. Does that mean they're there? Tommy gulped, moving a shaking hand to the doorknob and twisting it after unlocking the door with his key.

He opened the door.

He heard three sets of familiar voices and his heart dropped.

They're here...

Tommy didn't know why his breath quickened, or why the panic set in. Why was he like this? What was he scared of?

Guess he'll leave those questions to Puffy tomorrow...

"I can do this," Tommy thought, trying to convince himself. He used the breathing technique Puffy taught him as he closed the door behind him, wincing at the sound it made when it closed. He took a hesitant step forward.

"Tommy?" He heard Phil's voice call.

"Yeah?" He responded, ignoring the cracking of his voice.

"Wilbur and Techno are here, say hello!"

Tommy blinked in disbelief at Phil's voice.

When was the last time he heard Phil this excited? When was the last time he seemed happy?

Tommy figured his thoughts were right all this time. He was the least favorite, he didn't make Phil happy.

He ignored the swirling vortex of thoughts in his mind as he approached the living room. He tensed as his gaze landed on his brothers. Wilbur had a matured vibe but still the same, his hair still the brown mess that always seemed to fit him. Techno had changed more than Wilbur, surprisingly. His hair was longer and dyed pink, a surprise that somehow fit his brother. It was strange, how they were family, but he didn't feel an ounce of excitement. There was only anxiety and bitter resentment mixed together. As he looked at them, he remembered the night they left. How they left wordlessly, that they couldn't even fake that they cared. All he could see as he looked at Wilbur's face was that pitying smile he gave before he closed the door. He could only remember how Techno left without even a hint of an expression, as if he didn't matter.

That's all he could think of as he stood there, at the entrance of the living room and stared at them.

A simple, "Hey, Tommy," was all he got from Techno. The greeting caused Wilbur to look away from his father and turn to Tommy.

"Toms!" Wilbur exclaimed when his eyes landed on Tommy.

The blond simply waved, Wilbur's smile turned awkward.

"Um.. it's great to see you," Wilbur said.

"Yeah, it's nice to see you, big man," Tommy said, trying to keep his expression controlled. "Well, I have homework to do... so, I'll just do it,"

Tommy turned away, rushing to his room. He locked the door behind him and tossed his school backpack to the ground. Tommy jumped on to his bed and stared at the ceiling. There was a part of him that wanted to throw everything against the walls. The other part of him just wanted to cry.

"I'll miss you,"

Those three words were branded into his mind.

"I'll miss you,"

The way they left afterward never left him.

"I'll miss you,"

Yet, they had never missed him, that was clear.

Tommy ignored his phone, the occasional buzz in his pocket bringing him out of his thoughts. He knew his friends were worried, he knew his partners were worried, but he couldn't bring himself to check the messages. Instead, he laid there, until there was a knock on his door.

"Dinner's ready, come down," Phil spoke behind the door, "Come see your brothers, they missed you,"

What a lie...

Tommy reluctantly slid out of his bed, hesitating before he left the safety of his room and into the dining room. His brothers already sat down in their spots next to each other, Tommy taking the empty seat across from them. The food looked good, but Tommy wasn't in the right state to eat. He stared down at the plate. Even though he wasn't in the mood to eat, it was better than looking across the table. He would have to look at his brothers if he did.

"So, Tommy..." Wilbur spoke, "How've you been?"

"Fine," Tommy responded, still looking at his plate as if it were the most interesting thing he had ever seen.

"Just fine?" Techno questioned, Tommy nodded.

Phil sat down at the table, a smile on his lips as he stared at Techno and Wilbur.

"It's so great to have everyone together again," He spoke.

Tommy could have rolled his eyes, but he controlled the impulse. It was only great because Techno and Wilbur were here. The two years Tommy was alone with his father had proven that fact. He didn't care if Tommy was here, but that smile on Phil's came so easily when his brothers visited for the first time in years.

Tommy grabbed his fork and poked at the food, pushing and pulling at the potatoes.

"Tommy?"

The blond huffed, taking his eyes off the plate to look up at his brothers.

"Anything new? I know we haven't really talked-"

"We haven't talked at all, Wilbur," Tommy interrupted, "But there's nothing new to talk about,"

"Nothing? No new friends? It's just..."

"There's nothing new, Wilbur," Tommy repeated, tone harsh, "Why are you even here?"

"Tommy," Phil warned.

"It's okay, dad. College hasn't been going well, so I decided to take a break and maybe form a band?" Wilbur explained.

"I just came along," Techno said, "Needed a break too,"

Tommy wanted to scoff. Isn't that nice? They could leave without hesitation and come back whenever they felt like it. Tommy wished he was old enough to run from this hellhole, to move

away with his partners and focus on everyone at the bar. He wanted to leave like they did. He wanted to choose to come back, or ignore the endless messages from his family begging him to visit even just once.

They were lucky, but now they're back and trying to act as if everything is normal. They escaped from hell, but then came back as if they didn't run away to begin with. Tommy could admit he was spiteful, full of anger.

Tommy's phone rang in his pocket, causing him to jump. He took out the phone and noticed it was Sam calling.

He felt eyes on him and he rejected the call, shrugging as he placed his phone back in his pocket.

"Spam number," Tommy lied, going back to playing with food.

There were a few moments of silence before his father and brothers talking without him. It brought him back to those years before, where he was nothing but a presence. He was there, but not at the same time.

He hated it here.

Tommy's phone rung again and the blond sighed before yanking out his phone. He declined the call and sent a quick text message.

"You know, you could just turn it off?" Techno said, Tommy rolled his eyes.

"It's really none of your business, Techno,"

Wilbur sighed, "I don't get why you're acting like this. We missed you--"

Tommy snapped.

"Stop lying! You didn't miss me!" Tommy yelled, "You didn't even say you'd miss me when you left. Did you think I forgot about how you left that night?"

"Of course, we'd miss you even if we didn't say it, you're our brother,"

"Well, you're not my mine!" Tommy spat, ignoring how Wilbur flinched, "You haven't called me in two years, you haven't visited in two years, at this point you're just a fucking stranger!"

Tommy wanted to raise hell even more when Techno dismissively rolled his eyes. Techno was always like that, dismissive and ignoring his existence.

"Tommy! Do you have to ruin this?" Phil scolded, "They just came back!"

Tommy clenched his fists, about to open his mouth when Wilbur spoke.

"You know what, I'm glad I didn't call, I forgot how annoying you are," Wilbur spat. "You're making a big deal out of nothing!"

Oh...

Alright, fuck this then.

Tommy bit his lip, standing up and leaving his seat. He flipped off his family and rushed upstairs. He locked the door to his room and hopped on his bed. He turned off his phone.

Maybe he wasn't the nicest, but it pissed him off. How could they act like everything was okay?

"We missed you,"

Tommy laughed dryly.

Yeah, right.

What a fucking lie.

Chapter End Notes

I said it once and I'll say it again, give me platonic partners. As someone on the aroace spectrums, I want a life-time friend who will kiss my forehead and cuddle me, and we don't have to do anything romantic/sexual. Let's just watch a movie late at night, and criticize how bad it is, while eating chocolate/snacks at a distance or sometimes with cuddles/forehead kisses. Is that so much to ask??? I used to consider these feelings romantic, but now I'm like, I'm aroace and I really just need a hug. Screw society for romanticizing so many actions.

I based Tommy's experience on my own. I'm on the aroace spectrum and not adversed too extremely, but due to situations I dealt with and other factors, it adds to my aroace identity. My negative experiences didn't make me aroace, just kinda happened that way.

Anyway hope you enjoyed, see you next chapter!

I also posted a new story in this series of my Tommy-centric works. It's called the traces of you, check it out and see if it interests you!

HIATUS

Chapter Summary

Sorry...

Hello!

It's me, winter. I don't know if I told y'all my name on this story or not. It's been a minute. Honestly, I've lost interest in the DSMP and they aren't a hyper-fixation anymore. I haven't watched their content in months.

Now, this story will be on hiatus. I will update my other, more popular stories eventually, but this one doesn't hold my attention anymore.

I guess I was put off by some comments as well as losing interest. I feel like many people forget fics are merely free pieces of work people do to have fun and do because they like it. People write fics for themselves, not others, but they do hope people read them of course.

I received some disheartening comments about the music used. Lost boy was deemed "cringy" and the choices I picked were too "soft" for Tommy. Now they were only like three comments like this, but it still bothered me. If I use a song in this story, it's because I genuinely love it. I'm out of the loop about trends and who used what song to make a cringy tiktok or whatever. My mom knows how to use social media better than me and knows more about that stuff to make a point. Regardless, I wasn't aware lost boy was cringe, and seeing those comments hurt. Music is so deeply important to me and I never share it because I don't wanna hear comments like that. I never share or recommend music because it's the one thing I didn't want to be put down for.

So, when I saw those comments it hurt. This story is my self-expression, the song I pick are songs I love with all my heart and listen to regularly. I doubt it was intentional, but please watch what you say? If someone uses a song in a fic like this, it's clear they like it, so why comment it's cringy or reminds you of cringy things when the author felt proud of posting a new chapter after weeks of brainstorming and writing? Either way, I simply deleted them.

I'm a bit of a sensitive person, so I apologized if this just seems overdramatic. But those comments aren't the only reason, I just don't know where to go with this fic and as I stated before, I'm not into the DSMP as much anymore. I'm just turned off from this specific story so much and idk, it's on hiatus.

My other works might go into hiatus too, but maybe I'll try to finish You should have believed me, at least.

Anyway, thank you,

Winter.

Hope you enjoyed, I'm really excited for this story!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!